

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 351

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10406

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IN, SO

SUBJECT: NEW INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO SOMALIA

REF: NEW DELHI 9097

1. THE INDIAN PRESS HAS ANNOUNCED THE NAMING OF BENI PRASAD AGARWAL, CURRENTLY THE DIRECTOR OF THE EAST EUROPE (INCLUDING SOVIET UNION) DIVISION IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, AS INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO SOMALIA. THE THIRTY-EIGHT-YEAR-OLD AGARWAL HAS HAD TOURS IN MOSCOW (1961-1963), PRAGUE (1963-1964) AND AT THE INDIAN CONSULATE GENERAL IN NEW YORK (1967-1970?) IN ADDITION TO ASSIGNMENTS AT THE MINISTRY. HE SERVED IN THE POLICY PLANNING DIVISION BEFORE TAKING OVER THE EAST EUROPE DIVISION SOME EIGHT MONTHS AGO.

2. AN EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED AGARWAL ABOUT HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT IN A BRIEF CONVERSATION AT MEA AUGUST 1. THE INDIAN OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA BUT LOOKED FORWARD TO THE OPPORTUNITY SINCE HE WOULD BE STAYING IN TOUCH WITH SOVIET AND AMERICAN AFFAIRS BECAUSE OF INDIAN OCEAN AND BASING QUESTIONS. AGARWAL INQUIRED ABOUT THE CONGRESSIONAL VISITS TO BERBERA BUT EXPRESSED NO VIEWS OF HIS OWN ON THE VARIOUS ALLEGATIONS RELATING TO THE SOVIET BASE. ASKED ABOUT THE SOMALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S FAILURE TO VISIT NEW DELHI AS PLANNED ON JULY 4, AGARWAL SAID HE HAD NOT BRIEFED HIMSELF YET ON INDO-SOMALIAN RELATIONS BUT UNDERSTOOD MINISTER GHALIB WOULD

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BE PAYING HIS POSTPONED VISIT BEFORE AGARWAL TOOK UP HIS DUTIES

IN MOGADISCIO, PROBABLY SOMETIME IN SEPTEMBER.

3. COMMENT: AGARWAL, WHO SPEAKS RUSSIAN AND CONSIDERS HIMSELF A SOVIET EXPERT, HAS BEEN A DISAPPOINTING CONTACT AT MEA DURING HIS TOUR AS THE EE DIRECTOR. IN FACT HE HAS BEEN SO GENERALLY EVASIVE AND UNRESPONSIVE ON OUR QUESTIONS RELATING TO HIS FIELD THAT WE HAVE FOUND OUR CONTACTS WITH SOVIET OFFICIALS HERE ON SUCH MATTERS TO BE FAR MORE REWARDING. THE APPOINTMENT IS NONETHELESS INTERESTING IN REFLECTING GOI AWARENESS OF THE SOVIET DIMENSION I CURRENT SOMALIAN FOREIGN POLICY.

4. WE HOPE EMBASSY MOGADISCIO IS ABLE TO ESTABLISH A MORE PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH AGARWAL THAN WE HAVE MANAGED. HE IS OUTWARDLY FRIENDLY TO AMERICANS AND HOPES TO PLACE A TEN-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER IN THE AMERICAN SCHOOL. JUDGING FROM HIS PEREMPTORY REQUEST A FEW DAYS AGO FOR THIS EMBASSY'S POST REPORT ON SOMALIA AND HIS INTEREST IN WHAT FACILITIES OUR EMBASSY THERE OFFERS, HE MAY PROVE TO BE SOMETHING OF A PEST.
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